

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BEIRUT 14196 131851Z

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-10 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SAM-01 SSO-00

NSCE-00 SS-15 NSC-05 INR-07 CIAE-00 L-03 SAB-01 PRS-01

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P R 131508Z NOV 75

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7278

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

/AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI 2192

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

AMEMBASSY ROME

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 14196

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, LE, FR

SUBJECT: FRENCH INITIATIVE ON LEBANON

REF: PARIS 29472 (NOTAL)

1. WE SPOKE WITH FRENCH DCM CLEMENT TODAY, NOV 13. HE SAID HIS AMBASSADOR IS IN THE PROCESS OF CONTACTING FORMIN TAQLA TO GET THE EXACT DIMENSIONS OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS' DECISION YESTERDAY TO ACCEPT THE FRENCH OFFER SINCE, CLEMENT NOTED, THIS ACCEPTANCE WAS NUANCED. THE MISSION WOULD BE ONE OF GATHERING INFORMATION AND EXPRESSING FRIENDSHIP, THOUGH CLEMENT READILY ADMITTED THAT ONCE LAUNCHED, IT COULD EXPAND INTO A MEDIATORY ROLE DEPENDING ON HOW IT WAS RECEIVED AND
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PAGE 02 BEIRUT 14196 131851Z

WHAT THE PROSPECTS WERE.

2. CLEMENT SAID COUVE DE MURVILLE IS STANDING BY IN PARIS. HE WILL PROBABLY BE ACCOMPANIED BY A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE QUAI D'ORSAY AND ONE OR MORE PERSONAL ASSISTANTS. HE WOULD MOST LIKELY BEGIN, AS HAD PAPAL EMISSARY BERTOLI, BY TALKING TO VARIOUS TOP OFFICIALS AND OTHER LEBANESE LEADERS ABOUT THE SITUATION. CLEMENT DID NOT SEE THAT BERTOLI ACCOMPLISHED MUCH. CLEMENT THOUGHT SITUATION BEYOND REACH OF LEBANESE RELIGIOUS LEADERS.

3. CLEMENT CONFIRMED THAT THE FRENCH HAVE BEEN IN TOUCH WITH THE PLO ON THE QUESTION, AS PART OF A CONTINUING PROCESS OF REMAINING IN CLOSE TOUCH WITH THEM. HE DID NOT KNOW, AND DOUBTED, THAT THERE HAD BEEN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE SYRIANS.

4. IN PROCESS OF DESCRIBING ANALYSIS OF SITUATION HERE WHICH FRENCH EMBASSY COULD BE EXPECTED PROVIDE SPECIAL MISSION, CLEMENT MADE INTERESTING COMMENT THAT IN HIS ESTIMATION, THE LEBANESE LEFTIST GROUPINGS AMONG WHOM ARE THOSE LED BY QULAYLAT, ARE PLAYING A MORE IMPORTANT ROLE THAN MANY REALIZE. HE ADVANCED THE THESIS THAT THESE LEFTISTS ARE IN TOUCH WITH EACH OTHER AND ARE LED BY QUITE RESPONSIBLE LEADERS IN THEIR 30S AND 40S WHO DESIRE CHANGES IN THE POLITICAL AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF LEBANON. THEY ARE TAKING AID FROM LIBYA AND ELSEWHERE BUT ARE MASTERS OF THEIR OWN GAME. HE HAD BEEN PERSONALLY IMPRESSED BY QULAYLAT WHEN HE CALLED ON THE LATTER TO GAIN COOPERATION IN PROTECTING THE EMBASSY COMPOUND DURING THE RECENT FIGHTING, AS WELL AS HELP IN EVACUATING FRENCH CITIZENS TRAPPED IN HOT AREAS OF THE CITY. QULAYLAT STRUCK HIM AS A MAN OF 40, POLISHED, IN CONTROL OF THE SITUATION, AND WITH A HOST OF BRIGHT ADVISORS AROUND HIM. HE READILY AGREED QULAYLAT MIGHT BE VIEWED AS THE SUCCESSOR TO SAEB SALAM AS THE PRINCIPAL GUARDIAN OF THE MOSLEMS IN THE "BASTA" CENTER OF THE CITY, AND TOLD STORY OF HOW QULAYLAT REPORTEDLY HAS BROKEN WITH SAEB SALAM RELEGATING THE LATTER TO A POWERLESS POSITION.

5. CLEMENT ALSO EXPRESSED OPINION THAT PALESTINIAN GROUPS WERE ALL QUITE INVOLVED IN RECENT FIGHTING, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE MAINLINE OF FATAH. IRAQI EMBASSY DCM
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PAGE 03 BEIRUT 14196 131851Z

HERE WITH WHOM CLEMENT IS LONG-ACQUAINTED, CONFIRMED THIS VIEW, AND CLEMENT HAS HAD PLENTY OF EVIDENCE THAT GROUPINGS SUCH AS SAIQA HAVE BEEN INVOLVED. FINALLY, CLEMENT CONFIRMED THE OBVIOUS, NAMELY, THAT FRENCH EMBASSY HAS BEEN IN CONTINUOUS TOUCH WITH RIGHT-WING CHRISTIAN GROUPS SUCH AS THE PHALANGE, NOTING THAT IT WAS GEMAYEL'S DAUGHTER WHO WAS LEFT IN CHARGE OF THE PHALANGE BEIRUT OFFICE AND WITH WHOM THE THE FRENCH NEGOTITATED TO KEEP FIGHT-

ING AWAY FROM THEIR EMBASSY COMPOUND, AS WELL AS FROM
FRENCH LIBRARY AND CULTURAL CENTER.
GODLEY

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